

## DEUS PROVIDEBIT.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHENEVER the course of events brings disappointments, Pius X, so the report goes, is in the habit of saying, *Deus providebit*, "God will provide." The world knows that he is a man of pure heart and genuine piety, and that the reactionary tendency of his rule is due to his sincere belief in the old traditional dogmatism. He is not versed in the ways of the world and has not been touched overmuch with science or modern ideas. His horizon is limited by the traditional beliefs of his mediæval Christinanity, and the strength of his faith fortifies him in his attitude. If the Catholic church needed a leader of pure heart and of honest conviction Pius X was undoubtedly the right man to fill the place of Leo XIII. A statesman like his predecessor would certainly have avoided what the world calls mistakes, for the present pope lacks the diplomatic cunning of a politician and simply obeys the behest of his conscience. This is a virtue, and we ask, can goodness ever be counted as a fault? Perhaps the very limitations of Pius X may be the means of providence to accomplish results otherwise impossible.

In our opinion the views of Pius X are antiquated, and we deem it desirable in the interest of the Roman Catholic church that this great institution should progress with the times and that it should not narrow itself to the mediæval conception which stunts its growth and alienates from it the best minds of its own fold, such as Mivart, Loyson, Loisy, Tyrrell and others. In answer to the complaints of the men who surround him, over the increase of infidelity and waywardness of the world, the pope offers his confidence in God, and after all there is much comfort in his words, *Deus providebit*.

There is an infallibility in the development of the world's history, and the very attitude of the present pope which has implicated the church in many problems and has caused the loss of prestige and of many political advantages, appears after all to be a part in

the dispensations of a higher will that unfailing, like any law of nature, dominates the growth of all institutions, among them also the Church of Rome.

Thinkers whose vision is not dimmed by the traditional view prevalent among the supporters of the old regime in Europe, will understand that a free church will be as much more powerful and influential than the mediæval system of keeping people in bondage, as for instance the king of England, in spite of all the constitutional limitations of his government, is more powerful than the most autocratic savage chief of Africa who owns his subjects body and soul.

The world is ready for a new phase in its religious development, and the question is whether or not the Roman Catholic church shall participate in the benefits thereof. We believe that its adherents can as well adapt themselves to the modern world conception, as their Protestant brethren. But the conditions are liberty of conscience for all, freedom of inquiry for science, and a brotherly tolerance for those who differ even though they may be Protestants or infidels.

The Catholic church as a matter of principle has always opposed such demands by its rigid *non possumus* and as a result has suffered by being left behind in the progress of the times. The present pope does not see and does not want to see the rocks ahead. Being blind to the change in the times, he is unwilling to alter his course so as to circumnavigate the danger. May we not now interpret the several steps which he has taken as being providential in compelling the church to give up the old concordats with the states, to stand on its own footing and after wrecking the Curia itself, permanently to abandon politics so that forthwith it will become what it ought to have been from the beginning, a purely spiritual power?

There are Roman Catholics, both reactionary and liberal, who are inclined to interpret the policy of the Curia as steps which might have been avoided by diplomacy. But should we not rather take the view of Pius X himself, when he finds comfort in the words *Deus providebit*?

The Roman Catholic church is the most conservative Christian institution. It has maintained the old ritual more faithfully than any one of the Protestant denominations and has developed Christian art in its most beautiful and classical form. There is much that is admirable and great in its traditions if only the shackles of mediævalism could be broken. In our opinion this is possible, and there are some of her devout sons who take this view and would fain attempt to do the work of reform. But they have so far been thwarted

in their aspirations, and have been branded as the worst enemies of the church, and fully as bad as Luther. We would therefore ask our Catholic brethren to bear with us for a while and understand the grand opportunity which now faces their church, and we wish them to be convinced that our suggestions are made in the spirit of genuine sympathy. If we allow modernists to say a word of criticism it is not because of ill will, nor spite, nor hostility on our part, but in the hope that it will serve a higher purpose.

His Holiness is a good Catholic and he tries to be a good Romanist, because he thinks that that is his duty. But here he fails. He has not the Romanist's temper nor has he been trained in Romanist diplomacy.

We distinguish between Romanism and Catholicism and while we sympathize with Catholicism, we make no secret of the fact that we are opposed to Romanism. Romanism dominates the Roman Catholic church to-day and both the Curia and its abettors identify both. They state that no one can be a good Catholic without submitting to Romanist principles by which the church happens to be governed. But we demur. We believe it to be possible that Catholicism can exist without Romanism. We would be sorry if we had said one word against Catholicism; and knowing that Romanists will interpret the criticism of Romanism as a hostility to Catholicism, we warn the reader, especially the Catholic reader, not to misunderstand our attitude.

The present Pope commands our highest esteem on account of his sincere honesty, his genuine piety, and the pure simplicity of his life. He has all the qualities of a reformer and indeed he has done some reform work in abolishing the ceremonial, as well as in the papal household many too worldly customs. His personality is unostentatious and so he prefers to prove the dignity of his office not by pomp but by holiness and faith. What an excellent man he would be if his faith were broad enough to see the significance of science so as to understand the dawn that indicates the new era. However, though this talent has not been given to him, he still retains the nobility of soul as a man of conviction who tries to do his duty, and that may be providential.

Where a man of his type does not see his way clearly, he is yet convinced that he serves as an instrument in the hands of God, and he does so serve, for finally all will come out right. It may not be in the sense that he intends, but certainly in the sense of God—the God of history.

We can understand that Catholics are devoted to Catholicism

but we fail to see how truly religious people can support Romanism. Catholicism is vitiated by Romanism; yet Catholicism could be cured of its ills if it would only abandon Romanism. But this is no easy task. The Curia has governed the church so long that it will not give up its prey, and there is only one chance left, namely that the Curia will overreach itself by living up to the principles of Romanism. If the pope continues his present policy the time may come when Romanism will be wrecked, and if it be wrecked we shall see whether Catholicism will not be better off without it. *Deus provi-  
debit.*